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Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3140

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASUNCION 2135

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, EAID, PA
SUBJECT: ANGRY REACTION TO OPPOSITION LEADER'S STATEMENT IN U.S.

1. SUMMARY: OFFICIAL CIRCLES HAVE REACTED ANGRILY AGAINST AN OPPOSITION RADICAL/LIBERAL LEADER'S CALL, ISSUED IN WASHINGTON, TO CUT OFF ASSISTANCE TO PARAGUAY. HE HAS BEEN ACCUSED OF ANTI-NATIONAL ACTIVITIES AND COLLABORATING WITH THE ENEMY, THE LATTER TIED IN WITH THE U.S.'S "NO" VOTE ON AN IDB LOAN TO PARAGUAY FOR RURAL ELECTRIFICATION. A FOREIGN OFFICE OFFICIAL HAS COMPLAINED INFORMALLY, BOTH BECAUSE STORY WAS CARRIED BY VOA AND BECAUSE SOME REPORTS INDICATED LAINO WAS ON AN OFFICIAL INVITATION. THE INCIDENT COULD CONCEIVABLY HAVE A DAMAGING EFFECT WHEN TOP PARAGUAYAN OFFICIALS MEET MAY 31 TO MAKE DECISIONS ON HUMAN RIGHTS MATTERS. MORE LIKELY, IT WILL AGAIN DEMONSTRATE THE NEED FOR FURTHER PROGRESS IN THE OBSERVANCE OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND PROMOTE POSITIVE GOP ACTIONS TO IMPROVE PARAGUAY'S REPUTATION IN THIS AREA. END SUMMARY.

2. A NOISY AND ANGRY HATE CAMPAIGN, EMANATING FROM OFFICIAL CIRCLES, HAS FOLLOWED MAY 27 PRESS REPORTS OF RADICAL/ LIBERAL LEADER DOMINGO LAINO'S CALL, ISSUED IN WASHINGTON, TO THE USG, THE OAS AND THE INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS TO CUT OFF ALL ASSISTANCE TO THE STROESSNER GOVERNMENT. LED BY DAILIES "HOY" AND THE COLORADO
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PARTY'S "PATRIA", EDITORIALS AND ARTICLES HAVE ACCUSED LAINO OF ANTI-NATIONAL ACTIVITIES WITH CRITICAL STATEMENTS BY VARIOUS GROUPS, INCLUDING TAME OPPOSITION LEADERS, THROWN IN.

3. THE PRESS JUXTAPOSED THE STORY OF THE IDB APPROVAL OF A $32.5 MILLION RURAL ELECTRIFICATION LOAN TO ANDE WITH THE

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LAINO STORY. THE USG'S "NO" VOTE ON HUMAN RIGHTS GROUNDS WAS POINTED OUT AND LAINO WAS CONDEMNED FOR "LEGIONARISMO", A TERM USED FOR PARAGUAYAN COLLABORATORS WITH ARGENTINA, BRAZIL AND URUGUAY AGAINST MARISCAL LOPEZ DURING THE 1865-70 WAR OF THE TRIPLE ALLIANCE. THE STORIES ALSO CHARGED THAT LAINO'S ACTION WAS NOT ONLY DIRECTED AGAINST THE STROESSNER GOVERNMENT BUT ALSO AGAINST THE RURAL POOR WHO WOULD ALLEGEDLY BENEFIT FROM THE LOAN.

4. FOREIGN MINSITRY UNDER SECRETARY BARREIRO MAFFIODO COMPLAINED BITTERLY TO THE CHARGE AT TWO SOCIAL OCCASIONS OVER THE WEEKEND REAGRDING LAIN'S ACTIVITIES. THE UNDER SECRETARY EXPRESSED GREAT INDIGNATION THAT THE STORY HAD BEEN CARRIED BY THE VOICE OF AMERICA, THUS IMPLYING USG COMPLICITY IN "THAT MARXIST'S" POLITICAL ACTIVITIES, AND ASKED IF LAINO HAD GONE TO THE U.S. ON AN OFFICIAL INVITATION AS INDICATED IN SOME PRESS REPORTS. HE WAS TOLD THAT LAINO HAD NOT GONE ON AN OFFICIAL INVITATION BUT THAT HE HAD HAD MEETINGS WITH STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS, ALONG WITH HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE PRESIDENT, CARMEN DE LARA CASTRO, WHO IS IN THE U.S. IN RESPONSE TO A STATE DEPT. INVITATION.

5. WE ARE TOLD THE COUNCIL OF STATE WILL MEET ON MAY 31 TO CONSIDER ALL ASPECTS OF HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEMS. REPORTEDLY THIS WILL INCLUDE TACTICS FOR THE JUNE OAS GENERAL ASSEMBLY,
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HOW TO RESPOND TO THE IAHRC REPROT ON PARAGUAY AND WHAT INTERNAL STEPS SHOULD BE TAKEN IN THIS REGARD. THE LAINO "FLAP" COULD CONCEIVABLY AROUSE ENOUGH RESENTMENT TO ALLOW HARD-LINE ATTITUDES TO CARRY THE DAY WHEN HUMAN RIGHTS DECISIONS ARE MADE. THIS WOULD BE AGAINST OUR INTEREST. HOWEVER, IT SEEMS MORE LIKELY THAT THIS LATEST CONTROVERSY WILL DEMONSTRATE, TO THOSE WHO PREFER TO KEEP THEIR HEADS IN THE SAND, THAT HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEMS WILL NOT DISAPPEAR BY WISHING THEM AWAY. IT SHOULD UNNDERSCORE THE NEED TO TAKE ACTIONS WHICH WILL REDUCE THE GOP'S VULNERABILITY TO CHARGES THAT HUMAN RIGHTS ARE BEING VIOLATED. THIS WOULD BE A STEP FORWARD.
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